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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, June 28, 2007

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Grant emotional at hearing

2 lawyers leave in child custody case

June 28, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

For months, Stephen Grant has sat face forward, showing little emotion as he attended criminal and civil proceedings in the slaying of his wife.

But Wednesday, that image changed.

Grant teared up and his lips quivered as he listened to a state worker describe to a Macomb County Circuit Court referee how Grant's 4-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter are faring in the custody of his sister-in-law.

"The children are doing well," said Lindsay Greene of the Department of Human Services.

Referee Deborah Brune was to rule on whether Grant's parental rights would be terminated based on neglect. But in a twist, Grant abruptly fired his civil lawyer Sunday, postponing that decision.

"I was actually kind of caught off guard," said lawyer Stephen Donovan. "I don't know what precipitated it."

Another lawyer, Melissa King, stepped down Wednesday as the lawyer representing the Grant children in the custody case. King said she had accepted another job and had to close her private practice.

Lawyer Mark Taurice is replacing her.

Greene said the children go regularly to counseling. She said she has received updates from a service worker in Ohio, where the children have been staying with their mother's sister since Grant was arrested in early March.

As Greene spoke Wednesday, Grant turned and focused on her, his face red as he appeared to hold back tears.

Grant, 37, is accused of strangling and dismembering his 34-year-old wife, Tara Grant, on Feb. 9. Police discovered her torso in the couple's Washington Township garage.

In a June 4 deposition, he said he wants his children to live with his sister, Kelly Utykanski of Sterling Heights, if he is convicted.

Despite the game of musical lawyers, Brune was able to make one ruling Wednesday: She dismissed Grant's request to have his children placed directly in his sister's care.

Utykanski is expected to file a petition requesting custody.

Also Wednesday, Circuit Court Judge Diane Druzinski ruled that Grant can have a private psychiatrist evaluate him in jail. Grant's lawyers have said they want that evaluation to begin forming their defense.

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 313-222-2708 or alhunt@freepress.com.

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June 28, 2007

Mount Clemens

Psychiatrist to examine Grant

Judge orders test results be made public, caps amount spent on the doctor at \$750.

George Hunter / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- A psychiatrist will be allowed to examine accused murderer Stephen Grant, and the results of the examination must be made public, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Macomb County Circuit Judge Diane Druzinski granted a motion filed last month by Grant's attorney, Stephen Rabaut, to have Dr. Gerald Shiener examine Grant in the Macomb County Jail.

But Druzinski denied a request by the defense to quash the results of the test. The judge also capped the amount of money that can be spent on Shiener at \$750, which is the usual amount paid to expert medical witnesses in cases with court-appointed attorneys.

Grant is accused of murdering and dismembering his wife, Tara, on Feb. 9. His trial is scheduled to start Sept. 19.

"We're extremely happy with the judge's ruling," Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said Wednesday. "This motion was about ending the special treatment of Stephen Grant. (Rabaut) wanted a blank check; instead he got \$750 like every other defendant.

"Most importantly, the defense wanted to hide the results of the examination from the public, but the judge denied that. That was the biggest thing for us."

Rabaut declined to comment on the ruling.

Meanwhile, Grant's former court-appointed attorney in the custody fight involving his two children, Stephen Donovan, said Wednesday that Grant fired him on Sunday.

"He said he lost confidence in me," Donovan said. "One of the reasons had to do with the deposition" Grant took on June 4.

The children have been living temporarily with Tara Grant's sister, Alicia Standerfer, in Ohio since the state took custody of the children in April. Both Standerfer and Stephen Grant's sister, Kelly Utykanski of Sterling Heights, are seeking to adopt them.

Macomb Circuit Court Referee Deborah Brune on Wednesday denied a motion by Utykanski for direct placement of Grant's children into adoption.

The court appointed Mark Pellechia to replace Donovan.

Lindsey Greene, a representative of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said the Grant children are doing well in Standerfer's care.

The next hearing in the case is July 18.

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June 27, 2007

Psychiatrist can examine Grant, judge rules

George Hunter / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS --A psychiatrist will be allowed to examine accused murderer Stephen Grant, a judge ruled today.

Macomb Circuit Judge Diane Druzinski granted a motion filed by Grant's attorney, Stephen Rabaut, to have Dr. Gerald Shiener examine Grant.

Druzinski also granted a request by Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith today to have the prosecution's own doctor examine Grant, "provided that such exam takes place after that of Dr. Shiener," the ruling said.

Grant is accused of murdering and dismembering his wife, Tara, on Feb. 9. His trial is scheduled to start Sept. 19.

Meanwhile, Grant has fired the attorney representing him in a custody fight involving his two children.

Grant's former court-appointed attorney in the case, Stephen Donovan, said this morning that Grant fired him Sunday.

"He said he lost confidence in me," Donovan said. "One of the reasons had to do with the deposition (which Grant took June 4)."

The issue of who will take custody of Grant's son and daughter is playing out in Macomb County Circuit Court along with the criminal charges against Grant.

The children are living temporary with Tara Grant's sister, Alicia Standerfer, in Ohio after the state took custody of the children in April. Both Standerfer and Stephen Grant's sister, Kelly Utykanski of Sterling Heights, are seeking to adopt the children.

Today, Macomb Circuit Court Referee Deborah Brune denied a motion by Utykanski for direct placement of Grant's children into adoption.

Brune said Utykanski is too close of a relative to the children for that type of adoption.

"She can file a petition for relative adoption at a later date," Brune said in dismissing the case without prejudice.

The court appointed Mark Pellechia to replace Donovan, who complained to Brune that a tape of Grant's deposition was released to the media Tuesday.

Donovan said only one person had access to the tape: Michael Smith, the attorney for Standerfer, who has temporary custody of the children. Smith denied releasing the tape.

Lindsey Greene, a representative of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said the Grant children are doing well in Standerfer's care.

"I have talked to (a social worker) in Ohio, and she indicates the children are doing well," Greene said. "They are undergoing counseling on a regular basis."

The next hearing in the case is July 18.

You can reach George Hunter at (586) 468-7396 or ghunter@detnews.com.

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Macomb County news briefs

June 28, 2007

UTICA: 2nd man pleads guilty in teen sex case

A second man has pleaded guilty to having sex with a 14-year-old girl at her mother's Utica apartment.

Christopher M. Garcia, 21, pleaded guilty Monday to two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct and failure to register as a sex offender. He is to be sentenced July 23.

Garcia and James Przeadzki, 21, lived at the same two-bedroom apartment with the girl, her mother and the mother's boyfriend. Police said she was having sex with Garcia and Przeadzki, and Przeadzki was having sex with a second 14-year-old girl at the apartment.

Przeadzki pleaded guilty to assault with intent to commit sexual penetration and was sentenced June 14 to nine months in jail and three years' probation. The 35-year-old mother was sentenced May 24 to two years' probation for child abuse.

Her daughter is pregnant with Garcia's child and is living in protective custody.

Compiled by Dan Cortez.

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June 27, 2007

Plea withdrawn, woman collapses in drugs-in-diaper case

Edward L. Cardenas / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- A Clinton County couple accused of hiding drugs in candy wrappers and cocaine in their children's diapers were in Macomb County Circuit Court for sentencing, but the case was delayed when one of the defendants withdrew his plea and the other collapsed.

Both Marvin Blocker and his girlfriend, Tanya Humphreys, had pleaded no contest in May to six drug counts and one count of second-degree child abuse for keeping the drugs near their five children with whom they shared a house. Blocker also is charged with resisting a police officer.

But Blocker fired his attorney, Robert Vitale, because Blocker was unhappy with the sentence he was about to receive. Instead, he withdrew his plea, and Judge Edward Servitto Jr. set a trial date for Blocker for Aug. 1.

While Humphreys waited for her attorney to arrive for the sentencing, she collapsed outside the court and was taken to a local hospital. Her new sentencing date is July 9.

You can reach Edward L. Cardenas at (586) 468-0529 or ecardenas@detnews.com.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Teenager charged in toddler beating may be treated as adult

Thursday, June 28, 2007

By Lynn Turner

ltturner@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8564

A 13-year-old boy accused of beating a toddler could be sentenced as an adult if he is found guilty.

"It's too early to say whether it's going to be an adult sentence," Kalamazoo County Prosecuting Attorney Jeff Fink said after a hearing Wednesday. "We still have to have a preliminary examination and a trial."

The teen is charged with assault with intent to commit great bodily harm and false imprisonment of a 15-month-old boy who had wandered from his Kalamazoo home June 11. A preliminary examination is scheduled for July 24. Juveniles younger than 13 cannot be tried as an adult under Michigan law, but a designation granted Wednesday by Judge Stephen D. Gorsalitz of Kalamazoo County Circuit Court's Family Division would allow the teen to be sentenced as if he were an adult, if requested by the prosecutor.

"It may be that the best option is to keep him at the juvenile level," Fink said. "We wanted to keep our options open."

The designation granted Wednesday is sought when the crime is serious or the suspect has a long criminal record, according to Fink. In this case, the assault charge warranted the request, the prosecutor said.

The teenager was apprehended the day after the toddler was beaten, and police said he confessed to it. He "indicated to detectives that he wanted to see what it was like," Capt. Jim Mallery of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety said at the time.

The toddler was hospitalized for two days.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

New life, new hope for Lakeside residence

Thursday, June 28, 2007

The upcoming re-opening of the 100-year-old children's refuge off Oakland Drive, bordering on White's Lake, is welcome news for our community.

The past few years have been troubling for Lakeside for Children, its residents, the neighborhood, staff and board of directors.

The residential treatment facility for troubled children closed in June 2004, following serious disturbances involving the residents and staff, and an investigation by state authorities.

Lakeside's license was restored in January 2005. Operations resumed, but by last August there were only 15 children at the facility, and financial problems were serious. So Lakeside suspended its operations.

The Lakeside board, which deserves much credit for perseverance in the face of adversity, was not about to permit the closure of a century-old facility with a history of helping countless children in need.

That's where Sequel Youth and Family Services comes in. This private company with four campuses -- two in Iowa, one in Arizona and one in Wyoming -- is housing and helping some 700 at-risk youths. Soon, Sequel will be helping at-risk youths in Kalamazoo.

On July 9, Lakeside will open its doors to a dozen or more boys from Michigan and Sequel's other facilities. Eventually, girls will be housed at Lakeside, too.

Lakeside's former executive director, Don Nitz, who was superintendent of the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home for many years, told a Kalamazoo Gazette editorial board Monday that the new residents of Lakeside will be youngsters with conduct disorder problems. In the past, residents at Lakeside included those who had been severely abused and had mental problems.

The bulk of the funding to operate the new program will come from the state.

Another plus for Lakeside is the board's hiring of 37-year-old Travis Faulds as executive director.

Faulds, a Sequel employee since February, is a Lansing area resident. He received his master's degree in counseling psychology from Western Michigan University. His professional background in the juvenile justice system, quiet demeanor and enthusiasm should serve him well in his new post.

We were pleased to hear Faulds say that Lakeside's operation will be open and transparent, and that its residents will contribute to the community in a positive way.

Amy Upjohn, president of the Lakeside board, said she and her fellow board members were impressed with Sequel, sufficiently so as to approve a 10-year contract with the company. The board will continue to hold the license for the facility, and Nitz will serve as the board's liaison with Sequel.

There is no greater long-term investment that a community can make than in the health and welfare of its children. All of them.

We wish Lakeside success, and look forward to this historic landmark's continued presence in Kalamazoo.

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Local Childcare Investigation After Death

June 27, 2007 04:20 PM EDT



A Jackson day care is under investigation after a 16-week-old baby dies on the day cares' watch. The state now wants to know what went wrong. Tuesday morning at a Jackson daycare, 4-month-old Jayden Talarico was put to bed and never woke up.

An autopsy at Foote Hospital revealed no sign of trauma. Jackson police believe the day care center, known as Sugar and Spice, may have put Jayden to bed face down. The owner wouldn't go on camera, but she insisted she's done nothing wrong. She told us baby Jayden had been there less than a week and she called this a terrible tragedy.

The owner, Rosanna Domschot, has cared for kids for 13 years. She told us one other baby died from SIDS in her care. In a report received, we found Domschot is actively licensed to care for as many as 6 kids. She did receive one violation in 2005 for keeping dangerous items in site. Overall, no major problems were found. The Sugar and Spice center voluntarily shut down for the rest of the week. Both Jackson police and the state's department of human services are investigating. The question now: did the day care do anything wrong and could this tragic death have been prevented?



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Michigan's outlook on divorced dads costly to all

Published Wednesday, June 27, 2007 2:42:27 PM Central Time

By **MURRAY DAVIS**

Special to the Daily Globe

While recently celebrated by many fathers and their children, Father's Day in our state is increasingly mourned as well, since hundreds of thousands of fathers are involuntarily removed from their children's lives not because they are unfit, irresponsible or abusive, but simply because they are divorced or unmarried.

As a divorced father, I was among the fortunate who was able to celebrate the occasion with my two adult daughters. Nevertheless, for those of us researching the overall environment of fathers in our state and nation, it is increasingly difficult to remain completely upbeat and positive about Father's Day, given the current climate.

While current Michigan law may permit joint custody of minor children to be considered in divorce cases, state family courts seldom rule in favor of this type of shared parenting responsibilities, creating single family custodial households at an alarming rate.

Our analyses, and those of other organizations, are uncovering what might best be described as a "conspiracy of economics" among the three branches of state government (whether wittingly or unwittingly) that is ultimately creating and perpetuating the increase of Michigan single parent households, most of which are father-absent ... not by father-choice.

In Detroit and Flint, approximately 75 percent of African-American households with children are single-parent, mother-headed.

It commences with a 20-year-old erroneous state child support base formula guideline that requires divorcing or unwed parents to be designated either as "custodial or non-custodial" and

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continues with a court system that routinely rules to limit the time non-custodial parents (mostly fathers) spend with children in order to maximize the child support awards to the custodial parents (mostly mothers).

With non-marital cases (the majority type in Wayne County), fathers have a right only to provide financial support and must attempt to assert any other rights (such as parenting time, joint custody) in court using expensive legal assistance ... most fathers simply cannot afford this practice.

It continues with the Michigan Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement, and State Attorney General's offices that use these higher-than-necessary collected child support awards and collection efforts to help qualify Michigan for maximum federal Title IV-D (U.S. Social Security Act-Welfare) incentive payments and funding.

Note that Michigan's receipts in federal welfare funding for paternity establishment and child support enforcement alone now ranks the state second in the U.S. with the most families welfare-classified: over 41 percent of Michigan families. Compare that to California, which has over four times the families with minor children, but with only 18 percent of them welfare-classified. This means our state has surpassed even California, the nation's most populous state, by over 200 percent in welfare-classified funding participation.

It ends with a state legislature, largely influenced by the "divorce" industry, domestic violence and feminist special interests, etc., that routinely act to protect this cozy arrangement for state government.

This occurs despite the overwhelming social pathology research that shows single-parented children are growing up to use drugs, experiencing educational, health, emotional/behavioral problems and especially engaging in criminal behavior much more so than those who either live in two-parent households or who have meaningful access to both fit parents.

There is a simple, inexpensive alternative available in Michigan. It costs the taxpayers nothing and will save billions of dollars over time that our government now must spend in social services, law enforcement, the courts, and corrections.

It is House Bill 4564, the shared parenting responsibility legislation. It would allow children

to have the love and care of both fit parents in their lives regardless of marital status.

Unfortunately, although previous versions passed overwhelmingly in the Michigan House, this current bill languishes in the House Families and Children's Services Committee by the current chairwoman.

Cyber polls conducted by The Detroit News showed overwhelming (87 percent) support for such shared parenting arrangements.

Our state's families, children and citizens can no longer afford to continue down this same path of societal suicide and destruction.

Murray Davis of Southfield is board president of the National Family Justice Association (nfja.org), a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit education and advocacy organization for issues that affect American children and families. Contact Davis at NFJAPres@aol.com.

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On the Agenda

Holiday closings are announced

Local, county and state government offices have announced their closings for the Independence Day holiday. The offices for Washington Township, Ray Township and the Village of Romeo will be closed Wednesday, July 4, while Bruce Township offices will be closed Tuesday and Wednesday, July 3 and 4. Macomb County courts and offices, the Department of Human Services and the Secretary of State will be closed July 4.

The Graubner and Kezar branches of the Romeo District Library will be closed on July 4. The Graubner branch will close at 5 p.m., and the Kezar branch at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 3.

Samaritan House will be closed July 3-9.

The Romeo Observer will be closed July 4. Editorial material (birth announcements, letters to the editor, etc.) and display advertising will be due 5 p.m., Thursday, June 28. The deadline for classified display, real estate and service directory advertising is noon, Friday, June 29, while the deadline for classified advertising is 3 p.m., Friday.

* * * *

NEWS SUMMARY

HEADLINES

Romeo Schools hires new high school principal

Draft ordinance written to get Romeo 'officially' on historic register

WiFi process no longer lagging for Macomb County

Two local Farmer Jacks to be operated by Kroger Co.

New Washington Lions president looks to recruit

Water lawns from midnight to 6 a.m.

Washington woman's body found in Cass Lake

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From: Doug McCombs 989-354-7227

Presque Isle Co.

County DHS office could move to Onaway schools

School officials from Onaway met Wednesday morning (yesterday) with Department of Human Resources dual county director Doug McCombs and a DHS representative from Lansing, to explore the possibility of relocating Presque Isle County DHS offices to the Onaway Schools.

According to superintendent Bob Szymoniak, office space would be created by the school reconfiguring existing office space. He said discussions are preliminary and ongoing.

Szymoniak said, to address this matter with the public, the Onaway Schools will host a community forum Tuesday, July 10, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in the school's media center.

Szymoniak will be on hand to answer any questions, address concerns, and collect feedback that would be used to help with the decision as to whether the school should proceed with this possibility.

About 50 percent of Presque Isle County's DHS clients are from Onaway.

(continued on page 3A)

DHS office

(continued from page 1A)

News about the possible closing of the DHS office in Rogers City was revealed in late March.

A few weeks later, a DHS official in Lansing promised to keep a presence in the county. No new information had been released until Wednesday morning.

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MedAesthetics

Officials still investigating suspicious fires

By MOLLY MONTAG
Times Herald

KIMBALLTWP.- The Michigan Arson Prevention Committee is offering up to \$5,000 for information about suspicious fires at a former adult foster-care home at 6531 Lapeer Road.

An April 22 fire destroyed the home on the property, and a June 6 fire destroyed a cinder-block garage behind it.

The home, which used to be Pine Hill Adult Foster Care, was vacant at the time of both fires. The state Department of Human Services ordered that residents of the foster-care home be removed on Feb. 9 after police discovered a methamphetamine lab in the garage.

Raymond Archie Laturno, 41, of Kimball Township was sentenced earlier this week to 56 months to 30 years in prison for operating a methamphetamine lab in the garage. He was dating the home's owner at the time of his arrest.

Arson evidence found at the scene of the garage fire has been sent to the Michigan State Police's forensic lab in Sterling Heights.

St. Clair County Sheriff Department Detective Colleen Titus said it's unknown when test results will be available.

Few details about the fire, including where it started, have been released.

While officials still believe the house fire was suspicious, extensive damage at the scene prevented state police investigators from determining a cause.

Contact Molly Montag at (810) 989-6275 or mmontag@gannett.com.



Times Herald file photo by MARK

SUSPICIOUS: A reward poster asking for information about suspicious fires seen June 6 in front of the former F 6531 Lapeer Road in Kimball Town

WHOM TO CALL

TO REPORT INFORMATION

- Anyone with information about the fires that destroyed a garage and home in Kimball Township, is asked to call the Michigan Arson Prevention Committee at (800) 452-7273.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published June 28, 2007

Jane Marshall is executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan, the state's nonprofit food bank network.

Jane Marshall: Food stamps are benefit to all of Michigan

Michigan's congressional delegation has a tremendous opportunity to do something immediately to help our state's ailing economy - and at the same time, help residents who have been hurt the most by hard times. That opportunity is the reauthorization of the farm bill, which includes the food stamp program.

A sure way to boost the economy is to pump more money into it. Last year the food stamp program delivered \$1.2 billion into the Michigan economy - money that went to Michigan grocers, farmers and small businesses. It ought to be more.

More than 1.1 million Michigan residents - low-income working families and elderly citizens on fixed incomes - use food stamps each month. That number has nearly doubled since 2000, a reflection of our high unemployment rate and related woes.

Yet the benefits for the average household add up to only one dollar per person per meal. That amount makes a critical difference to families who are struggling financially. But it ought to be more.

It ought to be more because the buying power of food stamps has been shrinking steadily. Because of some quirks in the farm bill that passed in 1996, benefits have not kept pace with inflation.

It ought to be more because only 66 percent of those who are eligible for food stamps are using them. If only 5 percent more households took advantage of food stamps, it would add another \$76 million to our state economy, spent with Michigan retailers.

And it ought to be more because there are hundreds of thousands of households in Michigan that don't have enough money for food, but make too much to qualify for food stamps. The charity food network can't take the place of food stamps.

In short, food stamps are good for the state economy - particularly farmers, who supply much of the food that those stamps buy. Food stamps help more than a million Michigan residents get the nutrition they need to use their brains and bodies. That is why I urge all our senators and representatives to renew and improve the food stamp program when they consider the farm bill.

Michigan has nothing to gain by seeing the program cut, and much to gain by seeing the program continued and expanded. All of us gain by seeing the program expand. There are three ways Congress can do that.

First, increase benefits to adequate levels. Right now food stamps just don't go far enough each

month.

Second, expand eligibility so more low-income families can qualify for food stamps. Many households make too much to get food stamps, yet lack enough income to meet the basic costs of living.

Third, streamline the complex application process, which prevents many hungry people from enrolling and may explain why half a million Michigan residents who need food stamps do not apply.

The food stamp program meets a basic need for people in this area, and helps us all. Let's hope Congress makes it a priority to build on that success.

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New state Web site will help foster children aged out of the system

June 27, 2007

By JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The state launched a new Web site Wednesday morning that offers advice and opportunities to foster children who are "aging out" of Michigan's child welfare system.

The new Department of Human Services Web site -- www.michigan.gov/fyit -- contains information about services and support for hundreds of current and former foster youths.

Such a Web site was recommended by the Statewide Task Force on Youth Transitioning from Foster Care in 2006, in a process that included input from foster children.

"This Web site was at the very top of the task of the task force's recommendations and I'm delighted it has been accomplished," DHS Director Marianne Udow said. "The site provides a helping hand to foster youths everywhere, whether it's help in finding a home, tips for managing money, applying for college financial aid or seeking medical care."

Last year, 536 Michigan youths left foster care. Research shows the young adults are at greater risk of being poor, homeless and unemployed.

"It is a myth to assume a child of 18, who may still be enrolled in high school, is ready for independence," Udow said. "While a Web site cannot provide food, clothing and a secure home, it can help foster youths connect with a caring adult and locate resources to help them transition to adulthood."

For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs.

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Foster program boosts kids' hopes

Orchards provides skills, tools for those in need to succeed in life

June 28, 2007

BY SHARON GITTLEMAN

FREE PRESS SPECIAL WRITER

One early morning three years ago, Tara Way's six young cousins awoke to a nightmare.

The children's mother had been killed, and her body had been placed back in her bed, which her killer set on fire. Her boys, then ages 11, 8 and 4, and her infant girl were asleep next to their mom's body. Smoke and flames rose from the bedding.

"Christopher, the oldest, rescued the children," said Way, 32, of Detroit. "He grabbed the baby, woke up his little brothers, ran through the house and got his little sisters."

While his siblings are alive, thanks to his actions, a lingering sense of survivor's guilt seems to remain.

"Sometimes he says he wishes he could have taken his mother's place," Way said.

Since her cousin's slaying, Way has been the boys' foster mom. The family's three girls, now 12, 9 and 3, are cared for by another family member.

"I never want them to forget about their mom," said Way, who had given birth to her own child when the boys came to live with her. "I want to be their guardian where they are protected, have a normal life, someday go out to college and be decent men."

She said she has received a lot of help along the way from Orchards Children's Services. The agency, with its headquarters in Southfield and locations in Detroit, Sterling Heights and Ann Arbor, provides foster care, adoption and family preservation assistance.

It also offers the youngsters who pass through its doors activities ranging from job assistance to a baseball league.

Way said her oldest foster son spent a week at a summer camp and picked up a bike at an Orchards holiday party.

The connection between kids fostered or adopted through Orchards and the agency doesn't end when youngsters find a new home.

The Learn-2-Learn program provides youngsters a chance to gain new study skills, said Bob Blumenfeld, 44, senior vice president of finance and development for Orchards.

Learn-2-Learn also helps youths get organized and manage their time. "It's to give kids the ability to academically achieve," said Blumenfeld of Farmington Hills.

At one session, children take home a backpack filled with school supplies. At others, professionals work with teens, offering advice about filling out college applications and financial aid forms to helping youths get their first job and earn their first paycheck.

"We're there for them for the long haul," Blumenfeld said.

While adoption or placement in a foster home is the best solution for many youths, families sometimes can be reunited with a little help. Parenting skills, anger-management classes or hygiene help can be the ticket to returning kids to their mom's or dad's care.

Kesha Cooley, Orchards director of recruitment and job development, said she understands the value of foster homes. She grew up with nearly 50 foster kids for whom her own mother cared for nearly a dozen years. "She adopted five children -- all foster kids," said Cooley, 36, of Detroit.

For information about Orchards Children's Services or to sign up as a foster parent, call 248-593-2100, from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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New Website for Foster Youths

June 28, 2007 07:14 AM EDT

A website is launched to help foster youths. The site was developed by members of the Michigan Foster Youth Advisory Board. The Michigan Department of Human Services launched the website to connect youth in foster care with information and resources as they transition from foster care to independent living.



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EDITORIAL

Wednesday, June 27, 2007 9:40 AM EDT

Tax drama obscures dull yet vital weeding

At issue: Concern by state officials trying to work tax hikes into a 2008 state budget.

Our view: Tax follies in Lansing are distracting lawmakers from the real job of reforming existing state spending.

The Sopranos television series may be finished — or not — but Lansing state officials already have their own weekly installments of drama and strong-arm tactics.

The problem is that the show at the Capitol is distracting everyone from real work.

Tuesday's plot twist came in the 2008 budget crisis (not to be confused with the 2007 budget crisis). Gov. Jennifer Granholm issued a letter claiming to have a deal with lawmakers for a "slight increase" of state income and sales taxes of \$1.5 billion. That came as news to Republican Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, who told reporters that Granholm's claim of an agreement was "an outright mistruth." Soon after, Granholm backtracked and said her figure was a typo. It was only \$1.2 billion.

Meanwhile, several Democratic leaders allegedly threatened GOP lawmakers with cuts targeted at universities in their districts unless they support a tax hike.

At the same time, the Michigan Taxpayers Alliance is threatening to begin recalls of legislators if they do vote to raise taxes. And, in retaliation, Democratic Party state chairman Mark Brewer said his party will seek to recall GOP members one for one if not two for





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Index	Last Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2605.35	28.27 ▲
SP 500	1506.34	8.60 ▲
Russ 2000	838.46	11.00 ▲
AMEX	2349.15	42.11 ▲
NYSE	9848.91	41.73 ▲
30 YR BOND	51.89	-0.06 ▼

Jun 28, 2007 7:56 AM ET
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one.

Tony Soprano might feel at home, but Michigan residents should not tolerate such behavior. Recall elections, as we've stated before, ought to be reserved for public officials who actually break the law. Otherwise, regular elections work fine. And it borders on extortion to single out certain districts for threatened cuts that ought to be spread over an entire system.

Yes, tax talk is causing nervous Lansing lawmakers to lose sight of what should be their top priority — reforming government and finding cost savings to bridge the anticipated \$1.8 billion budget deficit. Spending, after all, should be easier to control than revenue. Here are a few ideas:

- Avoid a compensation meltdown similar to what the auto industry is experiencing. A Detroit Free Press story Monday indicates that, while Michigan has the nation's highest unemployment rate, state government workers are the fifth-highest paid.
- Break the stranglehold on state teacher health care contracts held by the Michigan Education Special Services Association, an affiliate of the Michigan Education Association. In fiscal 2006, MESSA listed a net gain of \$130 million, and \$88 million in 2005. Senate Democrats on Tuesday blocked two measures at reforming the system.
- End welfare for able-bodied state residents after four years.
- Since consolidation is being expected for smaller governments, consolidate and trim state agencies as well.
- Abolish the Office of the First Gentleman, and forgo the fancy new state police headquarters.
- So long as state unemployment remains significantly higher than the national average, suspend the mandatory prevailing wage laws on public construction projects.

It also would be good symbolism if Michigan legislators — the second-highest paid in the U.S. — brought their pay in line with the national average.

Still, lawmakers aren't alone in inverted priorities. Three weeks ago, Gov. Granholm proposed closing the \$1.8 billion budget gap with this formula: 83.3 percent (\$1.5 billion) in new taxes, 16.7 percent in cuts or savings.

State officials have their proportions backward. But we understand how hard it is to accomplish the dull work of government weeding and trimming when a tax drama provides so much more entertainment.